

PRESS RELEASE

## **Femininity of Leiko Ikemura in Jiri Svestka Gallery**

**/Prague, May 5, 2009/ *“I have always perceived Prague as an open and super-temporal city, even though it is full of historical tension and contrasts,”* says the Japanese painter Leiko Ikemura, whose paintings and sculptures will pass their first Czech appearance at Jiri Svestka Gallery from May 5 till June 13.**

She paints oils, she draws with charcoal, pastel, graphite or ink; she makes her sculptures from fired and unfired clay and bronze. Her paintings radiate a range of colours, from pale yellow, blue and green to the darkest shades of black, blue and red. Leiko Ikemura finds her inspiration in the nature and the inner life of all things living; she is also influenced by the contemporary life reflecting the modern political and social situation. *“I am interested in all elements of life, as well as in the human alienation and, within this context, especially in the woman’s character,”* Ikemura says.

At Jiri Svestka Gallery, Leiko Ikemura will exhibit her paintings and sculptures created in the past five years. The exhibition is divided into three parts. The first one is formed by the newest abstract canvasses with colour surfaces reminiscent of warlike landscapes. Ikemura has painted those with tempera paints on coarse-fibred hemp; most of the paintings are then finished with oil paints. *“I am more interested in painting into the canvass than onto it. That’s why I have recently been using mainly tempera which has more intensive pigment than other colours,”* the artist says. In the second part of the exhibition, Ikemura combined sculptures with work on paper. The last room is dominated by canvases with motifs of women’s and child-like figures. *“The poses her figures take on the paintings are very specific. Ikemura explores the elusive inner states, but never turns them into a story,”* John Yau, an art critic, comments on Ikemura’s work and adds: *“In her paintings and sculptures, the subjects, materials and processes mirror each other, as well as establish means for self-reflection. These are works in which we see ourselves looking at a world that is simultaneously vivid and distant, intimate and introverted, quiet and agitated.”* Also, the bronze and terracotta statues created by the hands of Leiko Ikemura represent a synthesis of women figures and hybrid forms drawing from the bodies of animals and plant shapes. The artist herself admits her fascination with the transformation of almost liquid clay into a solid substance during the process of firing. Drawings and watercolours on paper, which complement the exhibition, also work independently. They help the spectators find their way through the works exhibited, as well as represent sketch studies of these works.

*“Even though Leiko cannot be placed into any stylistic category and even though she creates art that stands apart from contemporary trends and movements, her paintings and sculptures are able to sustain prolonged comparison to the extraordinary works of Degas and Picasso,”* John Yau says. *“Awkwardness, vulnerability, isolation, inner turbulence and pain that is both unavoidable and devastating require that the artist be open to the world and all its states of flux and calm; it is a level of engagement that few individuals ever achieve.”* Leiko Ikemura at Jiri Svestka Gallery proves that she is undisputedly one of them.

Leiko Ikemura was born in the Japanese town of Tsu near Osaka. Since 1972, when she left Japan, she has lived in Spain (1972-79), Switzerland (1979-84) and Germany (since 1985). She never tried to fit into the local art scene nor idealized the different and particular landscapes she left behind. This self-sufficiency and individuality comes through in all of her art.

**Leiko Ikemura**

6. 5. – 13. 6. 2009

**JIRI SVESTKA GALLERY**

Biskupský dvůr 6, 110 00 Praha 1

tel. 222 311 092 fax 222 311 099

e-mail: [gallery@jirisvestka.com](mailto:gallery@jirisvestka.com)

**Opening hours:**

Tue-Fri 12 - 18 hrs

Sat 11 – 18 hrs

For more information please contact:

Lucie Pavlásková – email: [lucie@pavlaskova.cz](mailto:lucie@pavlaskova.cz), tel. +420 775 755 066

